

Implications of the Concussion Awareness Act: the School Nurse's Role

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Which student has had a head injury?



Which student has had a concussion?



LB 260 – the Concussion Awareness Act

- 1. Education – (a) available to all coaches (b) Athletes and parents
- 2. Removal of Athlete –
- 3. Written & Signed Clearance for Return to Play (RTP) – (a) written and signed clearance from an appropriate licensed health care professional, and (b) written and signed clearance from the athlete's parents.



What information do student & parents need?

- The signs and symptoms of a concussion;
- The risks posed by sustaining a concussion; and
- The actions a student should take in response to sustaining a concussion, including the notification of his or her coaches.

More on school responsibility

- If a student is removed from an athletic activity because of a suspected concussion injury, the parent or guardian of the student shall be notified by the school
- date & approximate time of the injury
- signs and symptoms of a concussion or brain injury that were observed,
- any actions taken to treat the student.

Post Concussion Management

- Mild traumatic brain injury
- Severity of injury not indicated by loss of consciousness (LOC) or lack of LOC
- Symptoms may last from days to months and usually occur within the first 10 days post-injury
- Persistence of symptoms not always related to severity of injury

Typical Post Concussion Symptoms

- No symptoms at all
- Headaches, Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Insomnia – difficulty falling asleep or sleeping less
- Loss of concentration and memory
- Noise and light sensitivity

More Physical Symptoms

- Light-headed, nausea, vomiting
- Balance problems
- Dizziness – especially associated with rapid eye or head movement
- Blurred or double vision, vacant stare
- Horizontal nystagmus
- Neck tenderness
- Numbness, tingling
- Changes in gait or speech

Emotional & Cognitive Symptoms

- May be more irritable, argumentative, suspicious, confused,
- Feeling foggy, anxious, depressed, moody,
- More emotional, sad, forgetful,
- Can't retain information as well as usual,
- Can't remember what happened

Changes noted

- School staff & family members may notice a change in the student's response or change in personality



Role of the School Nurse

- Be a part of individualized baseline testing
- Help student plan a course of recovery – may need 504 Accommodation Plan or changes to an existing IEP
- Help school staff recognize lingering affects of concussion and provide a gradual return to academic activities
- Monitor student for 2-3 months or longer if symptoms persist

If Concussion Happens at School

- Monitor student for at least 30 minutes
- Document signs & symptoms reported by student or staff or noted
 - *You can use the CDC checklist*
- Notify parent/guardian of place, time, signs & symptoms noted and any interventions done for the student.
 - *Send a copy of the checklist home with student and encourage parent/guardian to continue to monitor and seek medical attention if symptoms change.*

Student Need for Rest

- Getting rested - brain cells need the body's energy to heal
- The more energy an athlete uses doing activities, the less energy that goes to help the brain heal.
- That's why ignoring concussion symptoms and trying to "tough it out" often makes symptoms worse.

Students will need transition time

- Following a concussion, the student needs time to recover – may take days to months
- Physical – all athletic activities, PE, weight training, cardiovascular training, physical work activities, etc.
- Cognitive – test-taking, reading, assignments that require extended focus

Strategies for Physical Rest at School

- Encourage student to:
- Follow progressive return to play plan
- Report any lack of progress or increase in or return of symptoms
- Sleep problems often persist after a concussion making it difficult to get enough sleep at a time when the body needs more sleep
- May benefit from relaxation therapy

Physical rest at home

Limit all physical activities such as

- Bike riding
- Street hockey
- Skateboarding
- Community league sports

Information needed by School Staff

- A 504 Plan may be needed
- Provide preferential seating
- Gradual return to cognitive activities
- Reduce assignments, offer assistance with assignments, allow more time for assignment to be completed, delay testing if possible, shortened school day
- If tests cannot be delayed, allow extra time to complete test

More information for School Staff

- Student is not expected to do all missed work immediately
- Extra assistance may be provided to facilitate completion of makeup work.
- Student may be shortened days or alternating a.m. & p.m. classes
- May need help getting assignments organized – may need written instructions, planners, calendars, etc.



More information for School Staff

- May need to wear sunglasses in class
- Provide rest time and breaks as needed
- Be a part of individualized baseline testing
- Monitor symptoms for 2-3 months – longer if symptoms persist

Cognitive rest at home

- Minimize stress triggers
- Reduce or eliminate:
 - *Volume of music, television, etc.*
 - *Driving time*
 - *Video games*
 - *Text messaging*
 - *Television*
 - *Driving*

Medication

- Student may need medication for relief of symptoms such as headaches – caution from overuse though as it can cause symptoms to linger longer



Again, remember your concussion ABCs:

- A—Assess the situation
- B—Be alert for signs and symptoms
- C—Contact a health care professional

The Ultimate Goal... A Healthy Graduate



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